



Keys to Living & Aging Well: Cultivating Purpose and Positive Aging

April 25th, 2023
11:00 am – 12:00 pm

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Jewish Family Service



Cultivating Purpose & Positive Aging



Cultivating Purpose & Positive Aging Panel

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Gary Hauk, M.Div., D.Min.



Richard Gentzler, Jr., D.Min.
Director - ENCORE Ministry

Aging In America

Globally, there are cultures where older adults are revered, respected and admired...

What about in America?

Our culture declares that...

- ✓ Old age means **decline** and growing older is viewed with **embarrassment**
- ✓ Being relevant is to remain **young** and **youthful**
- ✓ Our worth is in our **productivity, beauty, strength,** and **high earnings**



Our Culture & Aging

- Our culture puts a premium on youth, beauty, and vitality
- The prevailing myth about aging – that it is nothing but slow and steady decline – is a by-product of our culture that worships youth and abhors getting old
- Aging is “bad” and old is “ugly”
- As a result, many people don’t want to be viewed as an “older adult”



How we age often depends on the way we internalize society's images of older adults



Ageism & Women

- “*Old age*” is so stigmatized that we go to great lengths to distance ourselves from it
- While both women and men do experience ageism, women often experience ageism to a greater degree
- The message in our culture is this:
 - “Women get old”
 - “Men just get...older”
- Older adults are resilient – they are learning new things and meeting new challenges

Ageism in Our Culture

- Ageism is prejudice or discrimination against older people due to negative and inaccurate stereotypes
- Ageism is hard to overcome because it exists everywhere and is deeply rooted in our culture and society
- We approach old age as an unsavory life stage and fail to adequately acknowledge its great pleasures or unique attributes and contributions



Ageism in Our Culture

- *“Ageism is a by-product of our cultural impoverishment that promotes our dominant image of persons as autonomous rugged individualism*



-Joseph Davis in *“The Evening of Life”*

- Two contrasting cultural views of Aging
 - Negative – Decline, deterioration, loss of control and dignity, and despair
 - Successful – Ageless persons, continuity of activity, productivity, and good health

Our Aging Population

- Because of our growing aging population, our culture sends the message that characterizes aging as a natural disaster – a tsunami – threatening our society
- Older adults may resist describing ourselves as aging because we are aware that being old is a devalued, stigmatized identity
- As we grow older, we may not take full advantage of opportunities presented to us because of self-imposed ageism



Changing Attitudes About Aging

- We need to recognize the negative attitudes we may have about *our own* aging
- We need to be aware of the negative attitudes we may have about older adults, in general
- We need to *reframe* aging in our setting
- We must treat all older adults with dignity and respect
- We can teach others by example
- Remember: we may all be old someday!

Aging is Inevitable

- Aging is a natural process of development that includes both gains and losses
- Each age and stage of life has its own unique challenges and assets
- Aging is how God made living things
- Aging is the only way to live!
- What does it mean to “live well” in our later years?

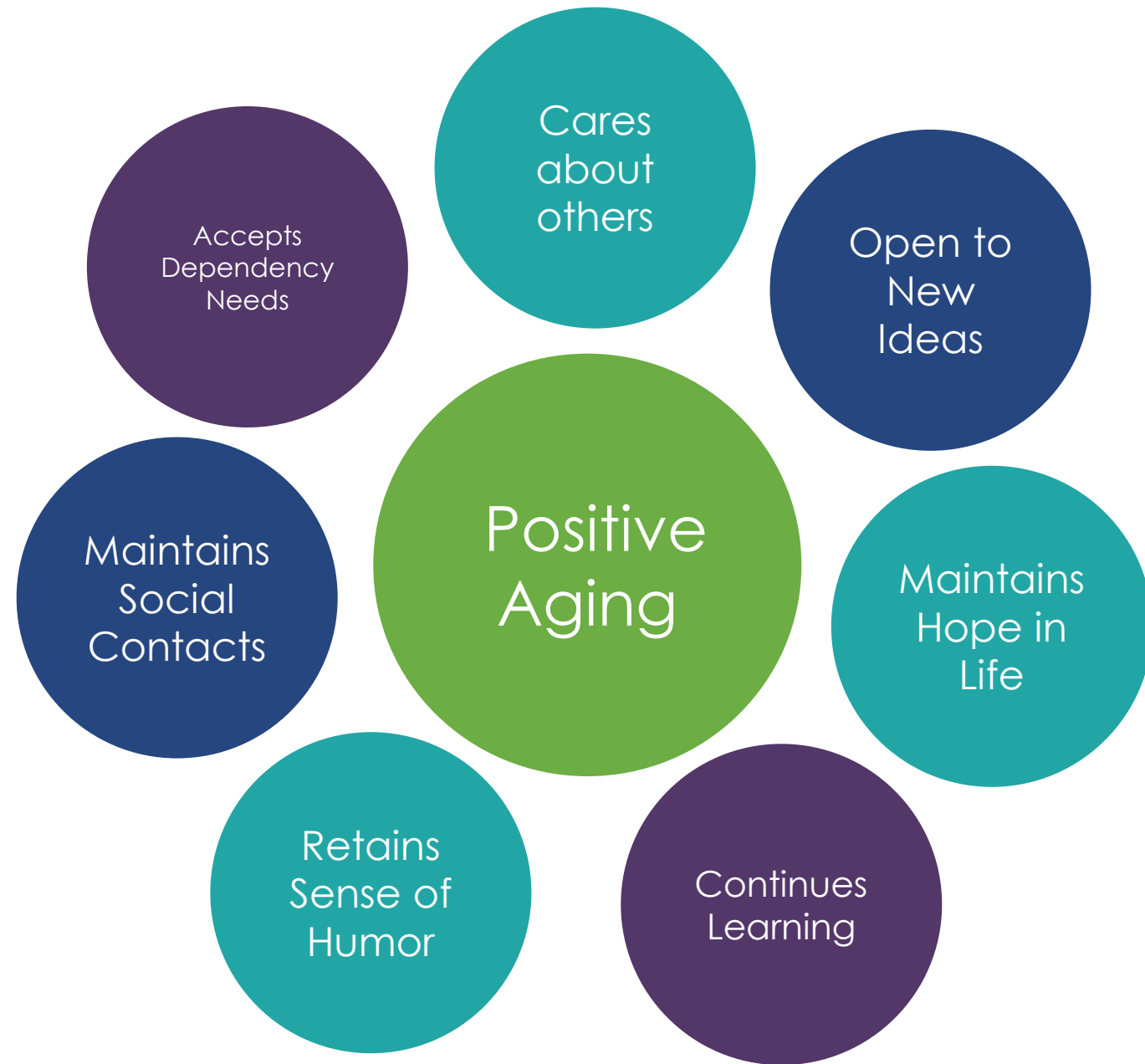


Overcoming the Mentality of Aging

- Start by embracing your own age, no matter what it is!
- Stand in front of the mirror and announce:
 - ✓ “I am the perfect age for me today”
 - ✓ “My worth is not based on what I still do or what I can’t do”
 - ✓ “My worth is not measured on what I look like”

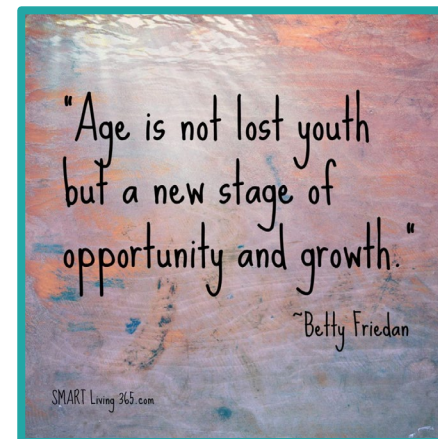


Characteristics of Positive Aging



Positive Aging Attributes

- Ignore ageism and ageist stereotypes
- Enjoy the freedom of being an older adult
- Seek social connection
- Keep actively engaged in the community
- Embrace change
- Expand notions of beauty, health, and sexuality
- Actively cultivate growth and development in your life

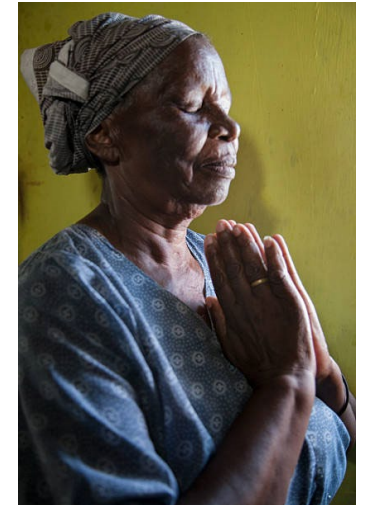


Cultivating Positive Aging

We need to *re-envision* a positive image of living in old age as we:

- ✓ Recognize our shared potentiality and vulnerability
- ✓ Embrace our creativity and generativity
- ✓ Accept our frailty and dependency

The role of *humility, gratitude, and acceptance* in the face of aging can help us to live an old age with *peace, reverence, and good humor*



Leaving a Legacy

- Perhaps the reason we have increased life expectancy today is because the world so desperately needs the wisdom and experience of older adults
- Beyond leaving material possessions and valued treasures, perhaps the greatest lasting legacy for older adults is best reflected in the life older adults have lived



Creating Legacy

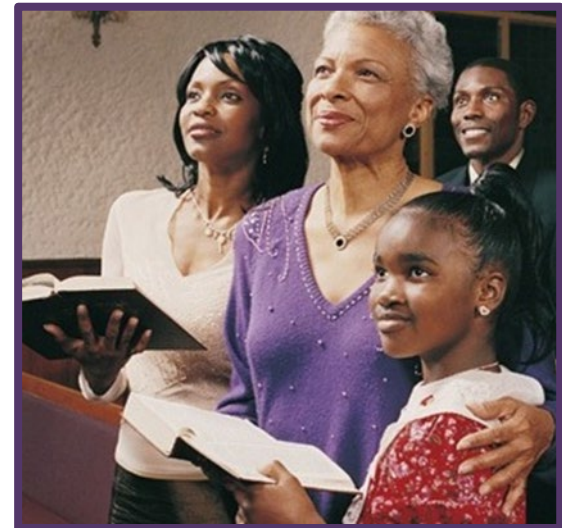
Perhaps the whole point of living longer is have time to:

- Discover our purpose
- Create our legacy
- Replant our wisdom



Questions Related to Legacy

- How do you want to be remembered?
- What are some wise things you have learned over the years?
- What is one story or event you want to pass on to the next generation?
- What personal legacy do you hope remains after you are gone?



Legacy Idea Starters

- Record your life story and faith journey: journal, videotape, create a scrapbook
- Mentor youth
- Volunteer in a nursing home
- Serve in a food pantry
- Telephone/Email/Visit persons confined to their homes
- Become involved in social justice issues
- Become involved in a senior center, faith community, or charitable organization



Imagine a New Story for Your Life

- Find meaning/purpose in growing old
- Reconnect with family and friends...don't go it alone!
- Take time to pray, learn, grow, and create
- Possess an attitude of gratitude
- Use your wisdom to enhance our world
- Try something new and serve as sages and wise elders for the next generation
- Fight against all forms of ageism

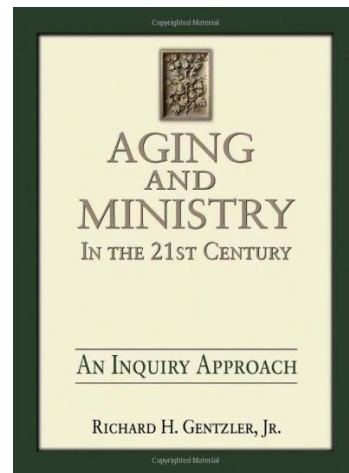
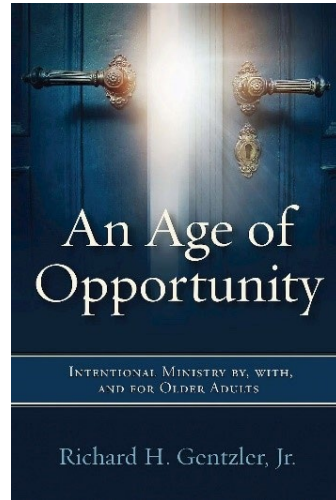


Working Together We Can

- Challenge ageism – in ourselves, in our congregations, and in our communities
- Create new language and models that embrace the full life journey
- Create new paradigms so that adults can participate fully with their capabilities and ambitions at all stages of life
- Create a society that supports the well-being of people of all ages
- Celebrate the contributions, faithfulness, and wisdom of older adults



Contact & Resources



ENCORE Ministry provides consultation, training & support, resources, and grant funding for United Methodist congregations in the TN-W.KY Conference - UMC

For more information, contact:
Rev. Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
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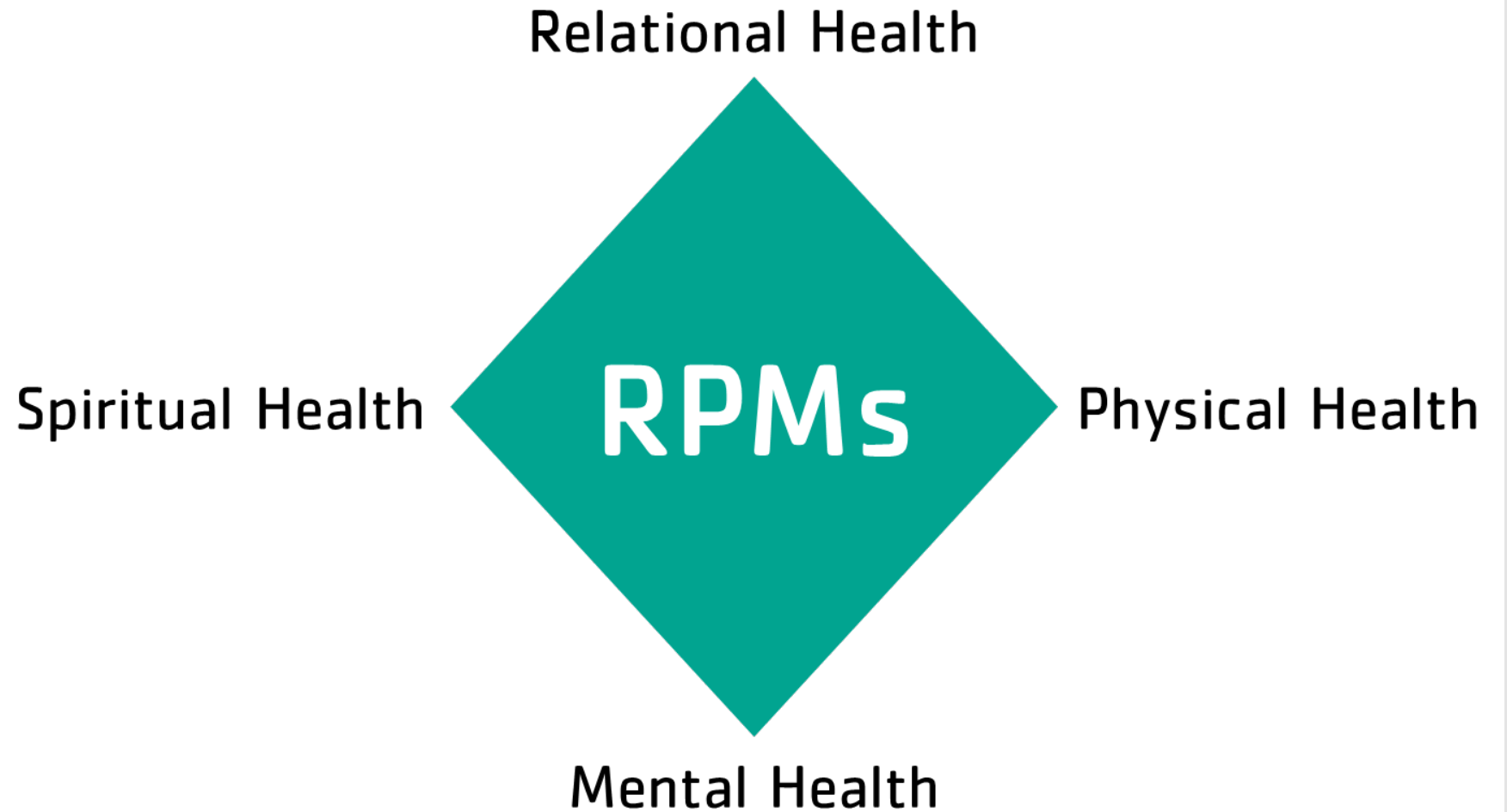
Cultivating Purpose & Positive Aging





Dori Gorman, M.Div.
Chaplain - YMCA of Middle Tennessee

Self-Care Action Plan



Relational Health Self-Check

- ✓ **Which of my relationships give me energy and life?**
- ✓ **Which are the most challenging or draining?**
- ✓ **How do I show up in my relationships?**
- ✓ **What is one thing I can do to improve my relational health?**

Physical Health Self-Check

- ✓ **How am I sleeping? Am I getting enough rest for the life that I have?**
- ✓ **What am I eating and drinking? What is my energy level?**
- ✓ **How often am I moving and exercising?**
- ✓ **What is one thing I can do to improve my physical health?**

Mental Health Self-Check

- ✓ **What am I learning?**
- ✓ **What thoughts dominate my mind?**
- ✓ **What have I lost?**
- ✓ **What is one thing I can do to improve my mental health?**

Spiritual Health Self-Check

- ✓ **What does it look like for me to feel connected to someone/something bigger than myself?**
- ✓ **What are my practices?**
- ✓ **What am I grateful for?**
- ✓ **What is one thing I can do to improve my spiritual health?**



Gary Hauk, M.Div., D.Min.

Volunteer Chaplain – Maryland Farms YMCA

Principles to Live By

1. *Express Praise*
2. *Stay Connected*
3. *Keep Contributing*
4. *Stay Hungry*
5. *Stay Healthy*

Transition Tasks

1. *Soul Casting*
2. *Cause Connection (Passion Pursuits)*
3. *Life Review*
4. *Networking Connections & Wise Counsel*

Questions for the Panel

Q&A



Upcoming Webinars

Keys to Living & Aging Well Upcoming Webinars

- Mental Health & Social Connection – May 16
- Financial Well-Being for a Long Life - mid June TBA

Register at agewelltn.org/upcoming-events

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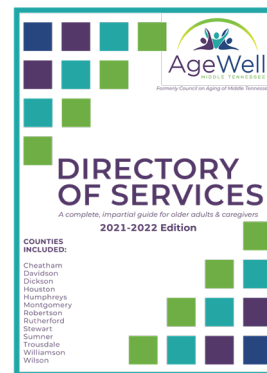
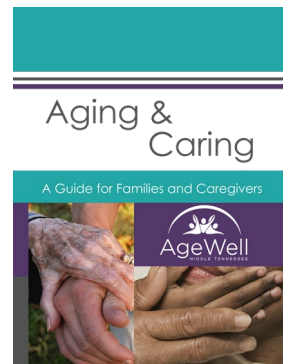


Contact & Resources



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